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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001803

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAP](#) [JO](#)  
SUBJECT: JORDAN: FIRINGS OF TOP GENERALS LEAD TO A  
PROLIFERATION OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

REF: A. AMMAN 1786  
[B](#). AMMAN 1764  
[C](#). AMMAN 1637

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lawrence Mandel  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S/NF) Summary: Following the firings of four top generals and over 230 other military officials on August 4, Jordan's political elite is searching for an explanation (Ref A). There is a fundamental lack of information about why they occurred and their ultimate political meaning. In the absence of facts, conspiracy theories have quickly evolved to fill the void. End Summary.

Firings Continue to Reverberate  
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[2](#). (S/NF) Contacts from both inside and outside the military agree that the firings are a serious matter. While the balance between tribal interests at the top of the military hierarchy has shifted, our contacts note that the overall East Banker base of the armed forces remains solid and unquestioned. The tribes believe the firings are part of a larger political statement rather than a move against their political position in the military. (Note: DAO will report on reaction within the military in a septel IIR. End Note.)

[3](#). (C) News of the firings is spreading primarily through informal channels. There has been no official press release from the military. Consequently, none of Jordan's major media outlets are carrying stories about the issue. (Note: In a recent survey by the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, over 98 percent of the 1,200 journalists polled said that they self-censor when it comes to news about the military. End Note.) The names of the four top generals relieved of duty were posted on the political gossip website site Khaberni.com on August 8, but names of the remaining 230 military officials fired at the same time were not posted.

Competing Conspiracy Theories  
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[4](#). (S/NF) In the absence of an official explanation, Jordan's elite is filling the void with a series of conspiracy theories on their political and social meaning. While some focus on connections to regional events, most concentrate on internal political dynamics.

[5](#). (S/NF) The Israeli-Palestinian Theory: Some believe that the firings are connected to recent developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the firings was announced at the same meeting of the Joint Chiefs in which the King railed against domestic "rumormongers" on the Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts (Ref B). By first clearing out some of the less-qualified generals and lower military officials, it is believed that the King is preparing the groundwork for a larger shakeup of the political system that would coincide with the regional peace effort.

¶6. (S/NF) The East Banker-Palestinian Theory: Some others connect the firings to discontent and grumbling among East Bank circles about the King's allegedly growing political affinity for Jordan's majority population of Palestinian origin. Contacts have told us of alarm within tribal circles with the increasing public exposure of the Queen (who is of Palestinian origin) and her son, newly-designated Crown Prince Hussein (who, as the theory goes, is half Palestinian, one-quarter British, and only one-quarter Hashemite). The tribes, which traditionally dominate the military, have reportedly used their connections there to voice discontent with the King's alleged inattention to the political and economic needs of the tribes. In this theory, the firings are a clear message from the King that his authority over the military is not to be questioned.

¶7. (S/NF) The Sarayreh Theory: A rumor has been floating around Amman that Chief of Defense (CHOD) Khaled Sarayreh is in line to become the next Chief of the Royal Court. (Note: Corollary rumors have it that current Royal Court Chief Nasser Al-Lozi would rotate into another political role. End Note.) In preparation for this shift, contacts are saying that the King is cleaning house within the military, either to remove political dissent or to prepare the way for a lower-seniority general to assume the CHOD position.

¶8. (S/NF) The Mohammed Dahabi Theory: Yet another theory has it that the military firings and recent personnel shifts in the Jordanian security apparatus are designed to remove the confidants of former General Intelligence Director (and brother to the current PM) Mohammed Dahabi from positions of political influence. In early July, the Ministry of Interior

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announced a routine shuffling of appointed provincial governors and deputy governors. The Public Security Directorate followed with a series of personnel changes. Now that the military has been reorganized, some are drawing a connection between the events, all of which come at a time when rumors abound that the former GID chief could face questioning as part of a lawsuit (Ref C).

Comment  
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¶9. (S/NF) In the past week, the King has both railed against "rumormongers" and provided grist for the gossip mill. As usual, Jordan's political commentators have been quick to read between the lines and fill in the details, regardless of their ultimate basis in fact. The bottom line is that no one appears to know why the firings occurred at this time. Embassy will continue to monitor and report on this issue as it develops.  
Mandel